

Mike Ferrant for Sergeant at Arms 2024

Greetings and thank you for taking the time to hear my story and qualifications to be the next Sergeant at Arms for the Vermont General Assembly. My name is Mike Ferrant and I am a resident of Williamstown, VT. My wife Holly and I own a home there and live with my children Chris and Melanie and our dogs Zoe and Nancy. I've lived in Vermont for over 25 years and love this state very much. To have the privilege to serve as the Sergeant at Arms would be a professional milestone and a personal honor of mine.

I have shared my experience with you all via email, and I'd like to elaborate on much of that today to give a sense of how these skills and experiences will translate well into the responsibilities of the Sergeant at Arms and the important work ahead for that position. I believe Janet Miller has done an outstanding job in her role as Sergeant at Arms since 2015 and I wish her the best in her retirement! I do hope she returns to the building in the future, as she has been an enormous part of the work to come in the next several years. I'd love her to see that progress in real time as it plays out.

The Constitution of the State of Vermont reads in Chapter Two "The doors of the House in which the General Assembly of this Commonwealth shall sit, shall be open for the admission of all persons who behave decently, except only when the welfare of the State may require them to be shut." This sentence served as our guiding principle during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impetus to the introduction of Zoom to YouTube livestreaming. This sentence will serve as the North Star for the next Sergeant at Arms as the People's House continues to be renovated and serve the great State of Vermont. The threats to the building, the order inside, and the people that visit and work in the People's House are very real and must be addressed. But at the end of the day, the doors must remain open and accessible to all Vermonters!

During my time here, I have seen many presentations from BGS and Freeman French and Freeman on the construction plans to come. These plans have changed and evolved over the years, particularly in response to the pandemic and the recent floods of July 2023. However, some common themes have remained intact: larger and more committee rooms, the need for an updated cafeteria, the request for more legislator working space, and the need for large hearing rooms in the building. The most recent plans outlined to the Joint Legislative Management Committee include more accessible bathroom facilities, ADA compliant entryways, more accessible means to travel throughout the building, and expansions of current committee spaces. These are big, ambitious plans and will take several years to complete in their various phases. There are important decision points in the next few years that will transform this beautiful museum into a more accessible, functional workspace as well. The beauty **MUST** be preserved though and the most common remark I've heard visitors make during the tourist season is "it looked so huge and intimidating from the outside, but once you're inside it feels so intimate and warm". We cannot lose this, as we work to make it more accessible and safe.

I have worked on construction sites of historical landmarks. I have overseen sensitive construction plans in delicate areas. I know how to follow a construction plan timeline and how to hold vendors accountable to those timelines. I have always maintained a positive relationship with the Department of Building and General Services and the State Curators Office. I would continue to foster and grow those relationships in the future, as well as attending regular meetings of the Friends of the State House, the Capitol Complex Security Group, and the local partners in the Montpelier law enforcement community. I will be an active shepherd of the important work to come and keep the relevant stakeholders informed of progress along the way. While it will seem at times that the renovations “never end” there will be significant progress made in phases and appreciating those accomplishments will be important to the overall success of this project.

For the People’s House to be accessible to ALL who wish to enter it, it MUST be a safe and secure place to meet and tour. The Capitol Police and their partners in the law enforcement community must be given the tools and training they require to successfully carry out their mission. I have experience in and a firm belief in the power of Serving to Protect. Capitol Police have always been very friendly, welcoming, and capable people in my time here. You feel welcomed and secure by their presence, and I see that as a critical skill going forward. This building is not immune to some of the violence experienced in other states and certainly at the federal level. But the feeling of intimacy and closeness of this beautiful building creates an atmosphere that is contrary to violence. I believe that is a solid core to build a comprehensive security plan around.

The Legislative Page Program, overseen by the amazing Door Keepers here, is one of the most important aspects of the Sergeant at Arms office, in my opinion! The engagement that young people have in those Page roles, the experiences they have here, and the important work they perform cannot be exaggerated. I see that program growing in scope and responsibility over the next several years, especially as the building renovations take shape. The future lies in the youth of this State and every opportunity we can give them to experience the People’s House is worthwhile in my opinion. I would work from day one to begin planning for an expansion of that program.

In closing, I appreciate your time and support for the election on March 1st. As that is Janet’s last day too, the transition of the new Sergeant at Arms will be a very fast moving one. I feel that my experience, vision, and energy will translate well into that transition and serve you all well into the future. I can picture myself 20 years from now wearing that wonderful green coat and announcing the arrival of Governor to the Joint Assembly with vigor, enthusiasm, and pride! Thank you for your support!

Mike Ferrant
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